

Marketing the Library

Marketing means different things to different people. Some think it is advertising, others planning events, while still others see it as public relations. Actually, it is all of those things and more. You can think of marketing as a broad range of activities that tie together the following four “Ps.”

- Planning: developing an array of services (products) that the public (customers) wants
- Publicity: telling customers about the services
- Public relations: taking part in activities that help users and non-users develop a positive attitude about the library
- Politics: advocating for the library with elected officials

Trustees have a role to play in each of these areas.

Planning

All of your efforts to market the library stem from the information in the long-range plan. In developing the plan, the Board has analyzed how the library can best support the needs of the community. In addition to the scheduled evaluations of the long-range plan, the Board can also informally monitor the library’s “customer service.”

There are several elements of this to think about.

- How are customers greeted at the circulation desk?
- Are conversations about overdue fines handled discreetly?
- Do customers typically have to wait in line at the reference desk?
- Are policies and information materials about library services and regulations readily available to the public?
- How are users informed of policies and plans?
- Is the library in a convenient, accessible location?
- Is there adequate, clean and safe parking?

- Is there adequate outside signage?
- Is the entrance inviting?
- Is inside directional signage adequate?
- Are materials clearly labeled?
- Are displays neat and attractive?
- Is there a community bulletin board?
- Are the restrooms clean?
- Is there a library newsletter to keep the public informed?
- How are new staff, trustees and volunteers trained in customer service?

Develop a Fact Sheet
about Your Library
<http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/Tools/libraryfact-sheet.htm>

Publicity

Publicity can cover everything from a press release to an image advertising campaign. Whatever form it takes, it is important that the library be visible throughout the community. Trustees can be part of this by bringing the library up in conversation. Whether you are talking to your friends or having informal conversations with local officials or business people, a conversation is a good opportunity to build awareness about the library and its services.

Trustees can also give formal presentations about the library to service groups and other organizations, write letters to the editor of the local paper and even carry library literature to give out when an opportunity arises.

How to Talk about the Library

- ✓ Speak to your listener's interests, not your own. For example, if you are speaking to someone who loves to hunt and fish, it doesn't do much good to talk about the library's collection of craft books.
- ✓ Don't give out false information. Be sure of your facts. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the person that you'll find out and get back to them.
- ✓ Don't make assumptions about what your listener knows. Don't use library jargon.
- ✓ Make sure you listen as well as talk.
- ✓ Be positive about the library. If you disagree with something that is happening at the library, talk to other trustees or the library director. Being negative about the library gives a poor impression of the Board, the library and the trustee.

To be effective in this role, trustees need to be very familiar with the library collection and services, attend continuing education programs and visit other libraries. In addition, the trustee should know the community, participate in civic activities, and serve on local committees to gain insight into the needs of people in the community.

Public Relations

More encompassing than publicity, public relations (PR) implies two-way communication—not only do you tell the public what your library is about, you gather information as well.

A PR campaign involves four basic steps: research, planning, communications and evaluation. First, in the research phase, the director assesses attitudes of various target groups toward the library. Next is the development of a written plan that includes a clear description of who the library wants to reach with the campaign, a timetable, short- and long-range goals of the campaign, staffing requirements, a budget and how success will be measured.

After the plan is completed, the director starts communicating the message to the identified target groups. Communication tools might include press releases, newspaper articles and photographs; radio and television public service announcements (PSAs); community group newsletters; displays, exhibits, and special events; billboard space (donated); printed materials such as bookmarks, booklists, flyers, brochures and posters; and personal contacts. (See pages 16-4 and 16-5 for more about press releases, and page 16-6 for State Library online tools.)

At scheduled points during the PR campaign and at the end of the campaign, the process is evaluated using the measurement factors identified during planning.

Policies and procedures for PR programs vary, depending on the size of the library, its financial resources, the number of staff and other local circumstances. The role of the trustees in these programs, however, is consistent: be prepared to speak to the issues and participate in events.

How to Write a Press Release

Press releases are a tool for keeping your community informed about activities, special events and operational changes occurring at the library. Unfortunately, many press releases end up in the editor's wastebasket because the information isn't presented in a compelling manner or is incomplete. Here are some guidelines for writing a good press release. For more examples, please visit <http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/Tools/newsrelease.htm>.

Content

1. Be accurate with all dates, names and places.
2. Include the most important details in the first paragraph (called the lead). Try to capture the reader's interest and include the most important elements of who, what, when, where, why and how. (Some of these can be addressed in the second paragraph.)
3. Include all details and information in DESCENDING order of importance. If space is short, the editor will cut the release copy from the bottom up.
4. Be sure to attribute statements, announcements and claims to some relevant person. For example, Mary Smith, Main City library director, announced that the group's annual event would be... Or, "Everyone's invited," Smith said.
5. Identify all people mentioned in the press release, either by title or relationship to the subject of the release. For instance, Sally Jones, professor, department of engineering, MSU. Or, Jane Doe, library spokesperson.
6. In most cases, keep the press release short. One page is sufficient for most announcements. Try to avoid ever going over two pages.

Format

1. Use short sentences and simple words.
2. Double-space the copy and never send a press release that isn't typed.
3. Include a release date or the words FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE at the top of the first page.
4. Include a contact with a name and phone number at the top.
5. Put (MORE) at the bottom of the first page if the article continues to a second page.
6. At the top of the second page, put one or two key words and the page number. For example: CHILDREN'S HOUR - Add 1 (or Page 2).
7. Put # # # or - 30 - at the end of the story.

Sample Press Release Form

RELEASE DATE:
(Specific date or "For Immediate Release")

CONTACT:
(Name, title, telephone number)

(SUBJECT):

HEADLINE

First paragraph should catch readers' attention and give essential elements of the press release. Remember to tell who, what, when, where, why and how.

Continue main points in second paragraph. Remember to give information in descending order of importance. Editors will cut copy from the bottom up.

When quoting individuals, identify them with professional title and/or relationship to the subject of the press release.

Always type and double-space.

– 30 –
(to end article)

(or)

– more –
(if article continues on next page)

(Heading for second page, top left corner)
(SUBJECT) — Add 1

What's Your Story
[http://msl.mt.gov/
whatsyourstory](http://msl.mt.gov/whatsyourstory)

News Releases
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/Tools/
newsrelease.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/Tools/newsrelease.htm)

Newspaper Articles
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/
How-Tos/interviews.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/How-Tos/interviews.htm)

Photo Ops
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/How-Tos/
photoops.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/How-Tos/photoops.htm)

Television PSAs
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/Tools/tv.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/Tools/tv.htm)

How to Succeed
on Television
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/Tools/
tvsuccess.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/Tools/tvsuccess.htm)

Radio PSAs
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/Tools/
radio.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/Tools/radio.htm)

How to Succeed on Radio
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/Tools/
radiosuccess.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/Tools/radiosuccess.htm)

Displays, Exhibits,
Special Events
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/
programming/
sampleprograms.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/programming/sampleprograms.htm)

What's Your Story?

Montana State Library developed “What’s Your Story? Find it at the library!” in partnership with the Montana Library Association to help Montana libraries market themselves to their communities. The multi-year effort, united by a single logo, will target a different market demographic each year.

What’s Your Story provides Montana librarians with a wide range of tools and materials, which are available online, that target specific segments of the community. Some of those tools and materials include:

- Programming ideas
- Programming checklists and audience surveys
- Book discussion groups—ideas, reader questions and book guides
- Television and radio public service announcements
- Print ads
- Posters and bookmarks
- How-to guides on everything from writing a press release to getting media coverage of events
- Talking points and key messages

Media Relations

Typically, the director serves as the spokesperson for the library, and the Board chair serves as the spokesperson for the Board. Designating a media spokesperson can save the Board from unintentional and sometimes destructive misunderstandings.

Should a reporter call an individual at home to get a response to a particular issue, for example, redirecting the reporter to the spokesperson will ensure that the Board’s agreed-upon message is the message the reporter receives. The director should keep the spokesperson informed of all potentially newsworthy issues as they develop.

Politics

Because libraries depend on public funds, politics are a fundamental part of marketing the library. As a trustee, your role is to be an advocate on behalf of the library and the citizens who use its services, extending your local public relations activities to elected officials to show them that public libraries are a factor in creating and maintaining sustainable communities.

When there are specific issues you ask these officials to act on, your advocacy role becomes that of a lobbyist. It is in this role that trustees become the personal face of the library. Although the library director and staff are also advocates of the library, political decision makers may view them as biased participants who have a personal, professional and economic stake in the library. A trustee, on the other hand, has the credibility associated with being a citizen who is voluntarily providing a community service.

Advocacy involves:

- ✓ Getting to know officials at all government levels and helping them learn about the library.
- ✓ Speaking out about what libraries do for the officials' constituents.
- ✓ Assembling facts and translating them into action.
- ✓ Planning and presenting evidence of need for a law or appropriation.

Trustees can make a difference because they:

- ✓ See the library from the user's viewpoint
- ✓ Have a perspective on the full range of public services
- ✓ Represent a broad base of consumers
- ✓ Are volunteer participants in government
- ✓ Vote

As mentioned, advocacy by trustees becomes lobbying when specific issues need to be addressed. However, your role in advocating for the library to elected officials is ongoing throughout the year. Contact them on a regular basis. Invite them to special programs and ask for their input on long-range planning issues. By building relationships with officials, you can keep them informed and aware of the vital role the library plays in the community.

How to Train Spokespeople
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/
How-Tos/
trainspokespeople.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/How-Tos/trainspokespeople.htm)

Know Your Legislator
Worksheet
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/
Legislative/knowyourleg.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/Legislative/knowyourleg.htm)

Shape Your Message
Worksheet
[http://msl.mt.gov/
WhatsYourStory/
Legislative/
shapingmessage.htm](http://msl.mt.gov/WhatsYourStory/Legislative/shapingmessage.htm)

Strategic Marketing Checklist

The Board, individual trustees, the director and the staff all have roles to play in marketing the library.

The Role of the Board

- ☐ Establish a written marketing and public relations policy.
- ☐ Make sure the library has a marketing plan and timetable, and evaluate it annually.
- ☐ Support staff training and involvement in marketing the library.
- ☐ Budget for marketing and/or assist in obtaining volunteer specialists to help.
- ☐ Encourage the development of Friends of the Library and other volunteer programs where suitable.

The Role of Individual Trustees

- ☐ Use the library.
- ☐ Talk about the library to friends and acquaintances.
- ☐ Keep county and city officials informed of library issues and of your continued interest in library matters.
- ☐ Participate in community activities.
- ☐ Listen to the community.
- ☐ Tell people what trustees do, who they are, when they meet, how they can be reached.
- ☐ Organize a speaker's bureau and speak to civic, business, professional and social organizations about library programs, services and facilities.

The Role of the Director/Library Staff

- ☐ Develop the annual marketing plan and budget.
- ☐ Evaluate marketing efforts and regularly report on these to the Board.
- ☐ Plan staff training on marketing efforts.
- ☐ Analyze public relations needs, plans and budget.
- ☐ Assess public attitudes toward the library.
- ☐ Develop rapport with media, community groups, writers, artists, business leaders and other libraries.
- ☐ Coordinate special activities with community groups.
- ☐ Actively promote the library on television, radio, in newspapers.
- ☐ Provide friendly service to all members of the public.
- ☐ Attend appropriate training and continuing education events.
- ☐ Interpret library policies, procedures and services to the public.
- ☐ Maintain community awareness.

Community Partners

Just as the public library promotes the common good of the community, so too can the community work to promote the good of the library. Two community organizations in particular can help sustain local public libraries: Friends of the Library and a local library foundation.

Friends of the Library

In many Montana communities, citizens who support the public library have established Friends of the Library organizations. A Friends of the Library group is a nonprofit organization that voluntarily supports library causes and services. Each group has its own bylaws, board, committees and policies, and sets its own goals.

It is important for the library Board to work closely with the Friends group to ensure that the goals of these volunteers are consistent with those of the library. The Friends' role can be enormously important, especially in small libraries with very limited budgets.

The Friends can serve as publicity agents for the library, sponsoring cultural and educational programs, as well as advocates for the library with local government. They can develop and coordinate volunteer services in cooperation with the library director and staff; organize fund-raising events; and encourage donations of materials, as well as bequests and endowments.

To prevent public confusion or misunderstanding about the role of the Friends group, the library Board needs to clearly communicate its needs and expectations of the organization. In some communities, a trustee is appointed to act as a liaison to the Friends to ensure coordination of the group's activities with library policies and goals. In turn, a member of the Friends group might be invited to attend Board meetings.

The national organization, the Friends of Libraries USA (FOLUSA), is a branch of the American Library Association. Its Web site includes excellent information about organizing and revitalizing Friends groups.

Friends of Libraries USA
American Library
Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
www.folusa.com

[www.irs.gov/charities/
foundations/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/charities/foundations/index.html)

Library Foundations

Library foundations can be a valuable funding tool to encourage gifts, bequests, memorials and other monetary donations. The foundation board and staff, if any, also represent another partnership for the Board. As with the Friends organization, a local library foundation can be of immense help but open communication is key. The Board and the foundation need to work in concert for the good of the library.

A library foundation functions as a separate entity and can attain nonprofit tax exempt status (known as 501c3) from the Internal Revenue Service, so that gifts may be tax deductible for the donors. Establishing a library foundation also opens up the potential of funds from other foundations that do not give grants to tax-supported agencies.

See Chapter 11, Funding the Library, for information on other funding sources, including grant resources, that might be of interest to a library foundation.